

November 11, 1963

Professor Harry Levin
Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass.

Dear Professor Levin:

I am the father of one of your students this year and would like to have your comment on what I believe are two bawdy puns of Shakespeare which have not, so far as I can determine, ever been published or commented upon. They involve the word "bunghole" in Hamlet, V:1:210, etc. and the word "bung" in Henry IV, Part II, II:4:136. I believe each is intended primarily to refer to "ass hole" and only incidentally to a barrel bung.

The use of "bunghole" results, as I see it, in a change in the meaning of lines 219, 220 following the first citation so that the "wind" means "flatus", and "clay" means "feces". Both Alexander's dust and Caesar's clay both are therefore alluded to as feces. The barrel meaning is pointless, only a justification for the pun.

The use of "filthy bung" is primarily bawdy and is warped to mean a cutpurse. I find no other use of "bung" meaning "cutpurse", only when expanded to "bung nipper", etc. "Bung" only means "pocket" when it stands alone. The word "filthy" would not be applied as an adjective if bung was to mean only cutpurse or purse.

My basis for these conclusions is the translation, in 1611, in The Dictionary of the French and English Tongues, by Randle Cotgrave, of the French word "Cul de Cheval" (Sea Anemone) as "a small ugly fish resembling a man's bung-hole". This shows "bunghole" meant "ass hole" in Shakespeare's time. "Bung" and "bunghole" are interchangeable when used in a bawdy sense.

-2-

Professor Harry Levin

November 11, 1963

All this has come about in my 15 year research for the true meaning of the New England Americanism "bungtown" and thus I had to work on Shakespeare along the way.

Will you be nice enough to let me know if you think I have added something or did you know this already?

Sincerely yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN

EPW
atb

HARVARD UNIVERSITY • CAMBRIDGE 38, MASSACHUSETTS

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE • 402 BOYLSTON HALL

November 18, 1963

Mr. Eric P. Newman
Secretary
Edison Brothers Stores, Inc.
400 Washington Avenue
St. Louis 2, Missouri

Dear Mr. Newman:

With regard to the verbal point you raise in your letter of November 11th, it is one which has escaped the eye of Eric Partridge, whose Shakespeare's Bawdy is the usual compendium for significances of this kind. Nonetheless, I believe that your surmise is justified; that there is at least the possibility of a metaphorical double-entendre in the two lines you cite; and that, if it gives you any satisfaction, you may well claim it as your contribution to Shakespeare scholarship.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely yours,

Harry Levin

Harry Levin
Irving Babbitt Professor of
Comparative Literature

HL:eaf

November 27, 1963

Professor Harry Levin
Harvard University
Cambridge 38, Massachusetts

Dear Professor Levin:

Thank you for your note indicating that my surmise appears to be justified as to the interpretation of "bung" and "bunghole" in Shakespeare.

I wrote to Eric Partridge and he agrees to the suggested meaning and will insert it in his next editions of "Shakespeare's Bawdy" and his various slang dictionaries.

I believe I am in line for one of the "lowest" distinctions in Shakespeare research.

Thank you for your kindness.

Sincerely yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN

EPN/atb

Recd 11/24/64

Dear Mr. Newman,

"That firm affiance," quoth I, "had I in you before, or else I would never have gone so far over the shoes, to pluck you out of the mire. Not to make many words, (since you will needs know,) the King says flatly, you are a miser and a snudge, and he never hoped better of you." "Nay, then," quoth he, "questionless some planet that loves not cider hath conspired against me." "Moreover, which is worse, the King hath vowed to give Turwin one hot breakfast only with the bungs that he will pluck out of your barrels. I cannot stay at this time to report each circumstance that passed, but the only counsel that my long cherished kind inclination can possibly contrive, is now in your old days to be liberal: such victuals or provision as you have, presently distribute it frankly amongst poor soldiers; I would let them burst their bellies with cider and bathe in it, before I would run into my prince's ill opinion for a whole sea of it.

This is taken from Thomas Nashe's The Unfortunate Traveller 1594. The episode is one of the farsicle burlesques (this one about the cider merchant) in the beginning of this "quasi-novel." I don't know if the author has the same thing in mind with his reference to your favorite word as you would predict, but I thought you might like to know this quote exists.

Andy's "Room mate"

Mike

Touff

November 25, 1964

Dear Mike,

I am ever so grateful for the excerpt from "The Unfortunate Traveler". Your contribution will be acknowledged whenever the material is published.

Now I know the origin of the expression "hot cross bungs".

Cordially,

Ch I.- 2288

22 March 1968

Dear Mr. Newman:

When you return to St. Louis, look up two books by the late Rev. Wm T. Starnes: The English Dictionary from Cawdrey to Johnson, 1604-1755; and Renaissance Dictionaries, English - Latin, and Latin - English.
These will supply names and dates of early English dictionaries.

Yours sincerely,
James G. McManaway
Folger Shakespeare Library

I'm sorry to miss your lecture on numismatics.
Sincerely yours,
James G. McManaway

from Dan Bartlett

BUNGTOWN —

NICKNAME OF
COLD HARBOR SPRINGS
N.Y. —

Reason: MANY COOPER
SHOPS IN EARLY 19TH
CENTURY - MANY CASKS
+ BARRELS INCLUDING
"BUNGS" = STOPPERS FOR
BARRELS.

SEE SHANKE'S AMER NICKNAMES
H.W. WILSON + CO NY - 1937

March 27, 1968

Mr. Dan Bartlett
Bartlett, Stix & Bartlett
Attorneys at Law
408 Pine Street
St. Louis, Missouri 63102

Dear Dan:

In appreciation of your continual research with respect to the word "Bungtown", I am sending you, herewith, a copy of SHAKESPEARE'S BAWDY, which is written by my friend, Eric Partridge.

The edition which will come out in July, of this year, will include a proper understanding of the word "bunghole", in HAMLET.

I have already located four cities which which are called "Bungtown", Cold Harbor Springs, New York, being one of them.

I will keep you advised when my monograph relating to this subject is completed.

Thank you, again, for your helpfulness.

Sincerely,

ERIC P. NEWMAN

EPN/atb

ERIC P. NEWMAN NUMISMATIC EDUCATION SOCIETY

6450 Cecil Avenue, St. Louis 5, Missouri

March 29, 1968

Mr. James G. McManaway
Folger Library
201 East Capital
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. McManaway:

Thank you, very much, for your postal giving me the bibliographies containing early dictionaries. Those bibliographies will be available to me here but I presume these dictionaries themselves will not. May I call upon you to look in your early dictionaries, under the words "bung" and "bung hole" to see what any of them show.

The dictionary which has given me the lead is entitled "A dictionarie of the French and English tongues", London, 1611, by Randle Cotgrave. This dictionary translates the word "Cul de cheval" as: "A small and ouglie fish, or excrescence of the Sea, resembling a man's bung-hole, and called the red Nettle (= Sea Anemone)."

There were subsequent Cotgrave editions and I would appreciate confirming whether my quotation is absolutely correct or not.

If you have the opportunity to glance in any other dictionaries, I will be most grateful to see if any of them refer to "bung" or "bung hole" as anything else but the parts of a barrel.

Many thanks for your interest.

Sincerely yours,



ERIC P. NEWMAN NUMISMATIC
EDUCATION SOCIETY

EPN/stb

2 Henry IV (New Variorum),

ed. Matthew A. Shaaber

Hamlet, ed. J. Dover Wilson
(New Cambridge Sh.)

BUM (meaning bottom).

A Midsummer Night's Dream II, I, 53

Puck

Sometimes for three-foot stool mistaketh me; 52
Then slip I from her bum, down topples she 53

Timon of Athens ~~I, ii,~~ I, ii, 270
^{Apemantus} putting-out of bums

Excessive bowing

Measure for Measure II, i, ~~227~~ 221
II i, ~~228~~ 222

Pompey: Bum, sir. 221 ~~227~~

Escalus: Truth, and your bum is the greatest ^{the} 222
thing about you 223 ~~227~~ ~~228~~

Hamlet

V:1

Prince of Denmark

155

Ham. To what base uses we may return, Horatio!
Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of
Alexander till 'a find it stopping a bunghole? 210

Hor. 'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider
so.

Ham. No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither
with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it; (as
thus:) Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alex-
ander returneth to dust; the dust is earth. Of earth
we make loam, and why of that loam, whereto he
was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?

Imperious Cæsar, dead and turn'd to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away. 220
O that that earth, which kept the world in awe,
Should patch a wall t' expel the winter's flaw!

But soft! but soft awhile! Here comes the king.

Enter King, Queen, Laertes, [a Priest,] and a Coffin,
with Lords attendant.

The queen, the courtiers! Who is this they follow? 224
And with such maimed rites? This doth betoken
The corse they follow did with desperate hand
Fordo it own life. 'Twas of some estate.
Couch we awhile, and mark. 228

[Retires with Horatio.]

Laer. What ceremony else?

Ham. That is Laertes,

A very noble youth. Mark.

211 curiously: minutely

214 modesty: moderation

222 flaw: squall of wind

227 Fordo it: undo its

228 Couch: remain concealed

likelihood: probability

223 awhile; cf. n.

estate: rank

As You like It

Act III Scene 2

written about 1600
First published 1623

Orlando: Can you remember any of the principal evils
that he laid to the charge of women?

Rosalind: There were none principal. They were all like one
another as halfpence are, every one fault seeming monstrous
till his fellow-fault come to match it.

this is the very coinage of your brain;
this bodiless creation ecstasy
Is very cunning in.

Hamlet Act 3 Scene 4

Shakespeare

Written ^{between} 1596 & 1599.

Henry IV : Second Part

Act II Scene 4 line 136

Doll Tearsheet, a ~~bold~~ ~~bold~~ ~~sister~~ where
she is ~~a~~ vulgar mouthed in the few lines she speaks

Doll "Charge me! I scorn you, scurvy companion. What!
you poor, base, rascally, cheating, back-linen mate."

* Away you mouldy rogue, away. I am
meant for your master.

Pistol I know you, Mistress Dorothy.

Doll Away, you cut-purse rascal! you filthy bung,
away! By this wine, I'll thrust my knife in your
mouldy chaps and you play the saucy cattle
with me. Away you bottle-all rascal! you
basket-belt stale puzzler, you!

The Yale Shakespeare

says "bung" ~~is slang for~~ "sharper"

cattle = slang for cutpurses

PE
2801
D 5
V. 3

Dialect Notes Vol III (New Haven 1913)

High
Dialect

from Worcester
Word list submitted by Prof Horace H. Estabrook
(1849-1908) Univ of Maine Professor

p409 bungdown, n. A large copper coin, evidently
a corruption of bungtown.

Word list from East Alabama

p295 bung-fodder, n. Toilet paper or a
substitute therefor.

Wadsworth
PE 3721
67

Francis Grose

A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue
(first edition 1785 London). Added in second edition
~~the next (2nd) edition is~~ of 1788 the following:

BUNG UPWARDS. Said of a person lying on
his face.

listed also
~~not mentioned~~ in Eric Partridge

A dictionary of Slang & Unconventional
English,
referred to as all upward

Noah Webster,
An American Dictionary of the English language (New York 1828)

BUNG n. 1. A stoppl of the orifice in the bilge of a
~~cask~~; Mortimer

2. A hole or orifice in the bilge of a cask.
v. to stop the orifice in the bilge of a cask with
a bung; to close up.

BUNGHOLE n. 1. A hole or orifice in the bilge of a cask.

Noah Webster 1828

An American dictionary

423

N.Y. 1828

W 395

~~and~~ 1828 edition

Ref PE16w

Webster's New Dict

W 3

1940

Ed. 2

1841-1845

1941

Washington University

R 227

1785 Francis Grose

A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue

PE 3721

G 7
1963

(1796
edition)

423

G 912 (1839
edition)

1720
edition

John Kersley ^{revisor} The New World of Words
compiled by Edward Phillips

Harr, Yale, Univ of Chic., Univ of Del.

B. E., A New Dictionary of the Terms Ancient and
(many) Modern of the Canting Crew (date of first
known) but about 1670-1700

Thomas Blount Interrogatio Vol 2 (part 1)
Folger MS. 152, 153, 1681
Wash Univ lib — Nothing on Bung or Bungle.

Nathan Bailey
Universal Etymological English Dictionary
first edit 1721 3 more 1723 (1st ed.).
Nothing on Bung or Bungle

John Mynshen: Doctor in
linguis, 1617

John Bullokar: English
Expositor, 1616

Giovanni Florio: A worlde
of wordes (Eng.-Ital.), 1598

Green Anna: New
wared of wordes, 1611

Henry Cockeram

423

C 645

1623

reprint

Watson

James G. McManaway

Folger Library

201 E. Capitol
Washington, D.C.

Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton
The Roaring Girl or Mell Cut-Purse
(London 1691)

Prof. English
Vol. 9 1/2

The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker, Frederick Boas, editor (Cambridge, England 1958), Vol III, p. 86, 87

The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker,
(London, 1873) Vol III, p. 217

Act V Scene 1 line ~~F73~~ 172-3

Trapdoor

~~Trapdoor~~: Ben mort, shall you and I
heave a boath, mill a keen or
rip a lung,

line 180-2

~~Moll~~: Marry this my Lord sayes hee: Ben
mort (good wench) shall you and I heave
a boath, mill a keen, or rip a lung?
shall you and I rob a house, or cut a
purse?

Mentioned in Oxford Dictionary

Wash Univ Lib
PR 2480

OXFORD DICTIONARY

BÖNG

Pick pocket

1597 Shakespeare Henry IV II, 1v, 138

"You cut-purse knave, you filthy Bong!"

Bungtown is not in the Oxford English Dict.
Oxford 1933, 1

Brum = ~~was~~ a contraction of Brummagem
"counterfeit, no genuine"

Brummagem = vulgar form of Birmingham
counterfeit coin (from goats meat)
there in 17th cent
counterfeit ~~of~~ ~~days~~

Brummisch = counterfeit ^(as to coin) ~~the~~ coin
not genuine

Samuel Johnson

B. 1709
died
1784

A Dictionary of the English language (London 1755)

~~full~~ #

BUNG A stopple for a barrel

first edition

BUNGHOLE [from bung and hole] The hole at which the barrel is filled, and which is afterward stopped up.

Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole.

Shakesp.

S.H.P. 1963

Eric Partridge

"A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English
NY 1961 (First edition 1937)

p109

Bung

4. (Also bung-hole.) the anus: low: late 18-20^{century}

Noah Webster

Webster's New International

* Dictionary of the English Language
(Springfield Mass 1961)

Bung

- 2a the cecum or the anus esp. of domestic animals
2b also bung gut: the anus of a slaughtered animal used as a large casing for sausage meat

Bungtown n [probably from Bungton (now Barneyville)]

Rehoboth, Massachusetts where it was manufactured: a copper token resembling an English halfpenny that circulated in the U.S. in the 18th + 19th centuries.

Noah Webster

Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language
2nd Edition (Springfield Mass 1951)

"

bung 5. A casing for sausage meat.

"

" bungtown copper or cent [Probably from slang bung to cheat, from bung pickpocket] An imitation, or counterfeit, of the English penny.

"

Qxford Slang

Cuttle-Bung = cut purse
↑ ↑
knife purse

The word bung is used to mean
purse in writings of 1567 1600
1591 1607
1592 1607

In 1610 "Bung is now used for a
pocket, heretofore for a purse"
from Martin's Marke-all p.37 by Rowlands
Continually not true 1740

"Bungtown subs. (old), Birmingham.

Bungtown Coppers = money coined for
the government by private Birmingham
firms; hence counterfeit coin "

"Brummagem (3) Copper money, struck
by Bentinck and Watt at their works at
Soho, Birmingham (1787)"

— George Eliot - Felix Holt, ~~xxx~~

"If anybody says the Radicals are a set of sneaks,
Brummagem Half pennies, scamps who went
to play pitch-and-toss with the property of the country,

A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles
edited by James A. Murray
(Oxford 1887)

Part III p. 1178

This is the
Oxford Dict

Bung 6.* ~~b~~ bung-hole, the hole in a cask which is closed with the bung; transf. the anus (obs.).

⇒ 1611 Cotgr. Cul de cheval, a small and ouglie fish, or excrescence of the sea, resembling a man's bung-hole, and called the red Nettle [= Sea Anemone]

In the Oxford Dict ~~&~~ supplement of 1933 the word Bungtown is listed as U.S. ad the origins in various literary items given.
on basis of American publications.

Maximilian Schele de Vere "Americanisms: the English of the New World" (N.Y. 1872) p. 587
"Bung-town, an imaginary town in New England, so called from the slang term to 'bung,' meaning to lie. Hence, Bung-town Copper is a favorite name of the spurious English half-penny which has no currency in the country. 'These flowers wouldn't fetch a bung-town copper.' (Fidd, Margaret p. 19). It is said that such a coin was really once made - a counterfeit, of course - in a town then bearing the name of Bung-Town, but since known as Rehoboth in Massachusetts."

Cards Cotgrave

~~his dict was published in 1611~~

His French-English dictionary was published in 1611
and editions of 1632, 1650, 1660, 1673

"A dictionnaire of the French and English tongues" (London 1611)

SPEC
PC 2640

Wash Univ 1968

A²
C⁷ Randle Cotgrave

A Dictionnaire of the French and English Tongues
1632 edition

In the French-English portion

Cul de cheval. A small, and englie fish,
or exorescence of the sea, resembling
a mans bung-hole, and called, the
red Nettle.

Cul: An arse, bumme, tayle,
nockandro., fundament.

Cul d'asne. as Cubasean. the small sea-nettle

asne = ass

Under English-French portion

Nettle. Ortie, hortie

the small stinging red nettle. Ortie
griesche, ortie grecque

A Bung. Bondon, tampon, tapon

A Bung-hole. L'orifice d'un mancan, le trou ou le bondon est mis.

~~Bungtown~~, ~~Bungle~~ is not listed

This is the sea anemone

Eric Partridge

A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English (London 1937)

Bung

2. In cant of mid-C. 16 - early 19, a purse. Harmon, Green, Grose. Cf. A.-S. and Frisian. pung, a purse (Oxford English Dictionary).
3. Hence in cant or low slang of late C. 16-17, e.g. in Shakespeare, a cut purse. Hence bung-knife, late C. 16, is either a knife for purse slitting or one kept in a purse. -
4. (Also bung-hole) the anus; low; late C. 18-20.

Dictionary of American Slang
Harold Wentworth and Stuart B.
Flexner 1967 edit supplement

bum hole (taboo) 1. the
anus, 2. To have, permit or
prefer anal intercourse.

only in supplement

Cawdry Robert 1604
reprint

PE 1620

C 35

1604 a

Wm. Wm.

nothing

The American encyclopaedic dictionary
cheap 1874 edited by Robert Hunter
423 Am 35

Wolberg

The Universal Dictionary
William Falconer (London)
(1771)

V 23

F 18

1771

Notary

his Chap XV has
cant glossary.

George Parker, "Life's Painter of Variegated Characters
in Public and Private life" (1789) p 122,
a protestation of reluctance

"I do beseech my fair readers to shun it, lest
in this primrose path, they meet a snake in
the grass."

Elisha Coles English Dictionary (1676)

just to include cant in genl dict

"Tas no Disparagement to understand the Canting
Terms: It may chance to save your Throat from
being cut, or (at least) your Pocket from
being pick'd."

CHYDORUS' BYRON'S
HELLA'S COBRA'S

EXECUTIVE OFFICES: 100 MURKINSON WAY, WATKINSVILLE, GA, PHONE NO. 827-18

EDISON BROTHERS STORES INC.

S. H.
S. H.

Shakespeare's use of the word flaw.

flaw -

a sudden gust of wind

A NEW VARIORUM EDITION OF SHAKESPEARE, Matthias A. Shaaber, (Vol.23),
Philadelphia & London (J.B.Lippincott Company), 1940. (The Second
Part of Henry The Fourth)

130. Bung) STEEVENS (Var. '78): In the cant of thievery,
to nip a bung was to cut a purse; and among an explanation of
many of these terms in Martin Mark-All's Apologie to the Bel-man
of London, 1610 (ed. Judges, The Elizabethan Underworld, 1930,
p. 407), it is said that "Bung is now used for a pocket,
heretofore for a purse." ~ CLARKE (ed. 1865): We think that
Doll, besides thus by inference calling Pistol a "pick-pocket,"
includes allusion to his being saturated with the fumes of the
beer-barrel. ~ N.E.D. (Bung sb.²): Thieves' Cant. Obs. a.A
purse. b. A pick-pocket. (This line is quoted as an example,
but in every other quotation the word means purse.) ~ NARES
(ed. 1888) quotes some verses from An Age for Apes (1658) in
~~WWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWW~~ which bung means pickpocket.

6/20/60

Martin Marke-all's Apologie
to the Bel-man of London

published like 1610

"Bung is now used for a pocket,
heretofore for a purse."

Webster Dict 2nd Edt
New Int'l 1945

bung -

a casing for
sausage meat